

News from Ed Markey

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TV INDUSTRY CRITICS IN HOUSE TO WITHHOLD LEGISLATION ONCE NEW TV RATINGS SYSTEM IS ANNOUNCED

Key V-Chip Lawmakers Give Assurances to Industry, Advocates

Washington, DC -- Reps. Edward Markey (D-MA), Dan Burton (R-IN), Jim Moran (D-VA) and John Spratt (D-SC) today released a letter to the TV industry pledging their support for a "cease fire" on TV content legislation if and when the industry and parents groups reach agreement on adding content indicators to the industry's age-based ratings system.

"This is a bipartisan letter prepared by some of the industry's severest critics in the House of Representatives," said Markey. "The signers of this letter were the authors of the V-Chip law. We have been singleminded in our focus on implementing this important law so that parents could decide for themselves and their families whether to block TV programming based on violent, sexual or profane content. We have been outspoken and persistent in our opposition to a ratings system that denied parents these blocking options. We are now stating just as clearly that if the industry is willing to implement a content-based ratings system approved by the parents groups, we will let both sides make it work by discouraging additional legislative attacks for at least three years."

The lawmakers addressed their letter to Mr. Decker Anstrom of the National Cable Television Association, Mr. Edward Fritts of the National Association of Broadcasters, and Mr. Jack Valenti of the Motion Picture Association of America. The letter states that, assuming the parents groups and the industry agree on the details of the new system, the legislators would support the revised system at the FCC and not enact new legislation or regulations designed to influence the airing of controversial content (through, e.g., television ratings, content or scheduling) for a period of three years starting October 1, 1997 (the starting date for the new Television Parental Guidelines System). The assurances would apply to all those channels and networks who participate by providing the new ratings on their programming.

"We hope these assurances are greeted in the spirit we have made them," Markey continued. "The parents groups have also offered meaningful assurances to the industry, and we expect other lawmakers to step forward as well. This should move us several steps closer to resolving this difficult debate in a way that can deliver lasting benefits to American families." # # # #